

Anātha,piṇḍika Sutta 1

The First Discourse to Anātha,piṇḍika

[Bedside ministry: the ten limbs of streamwinning]

(Sāmyutta Nikāya 55.26/5:380-385)

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2008

1 Anātha,piṇḍika

Anātha,piṇḍika was the son of the seth Sumana (Sumana Setṭhī) of Sāvattṭhi, and in due course became the seth¹ of Sāvattṭhī himself. On account of his unsurpassed generosity, he is well known in Buddhism as the foremost of lay-supporters or alms-givers (*dāyaka*).² Although his personal name was Sudatta, he is better known as **Anātha,piṇḍika**, “the giver of alms to the destitute,” because of his consistent and great munificence (AA 1:384). He bought the **Jeta,vana** (Prince Jeta’s grove) at a high price and therein built a monastery, named after him (**the Anātha,piṇḍikass’ārāma**). The Commentaries say that he daily fed hundred of monks in house, and provided meals for guests, the villagers, invalids, and others, and had 500 seats ready for any quests.³

Anātha,piṇḍika’s wife—called Puñña,lakkhaṇa⁴—was the sister of the seth of Rāja,gaha. The Commentaries⁵ record that during the first year of the Ministry, Anātha,piṇḍika, on his visit to Rāja,gaha found that the Rājagaha seth had prepared a great feast, like that for a wedding or the rajah Bimbisāra. On hearing the word, “Buddha,” his past karma ripened and he was filled with faith. Being so excited by the thought of meeting the Buddha, he awoke thrice in the night. Rising early, while it was still dark, he at once headed for Sīta,vana, where the Buddha was staying. The path was quite dark, but a friendly yaksha, Sīvaka, encouraged him on. Through his great faith, his path was lightened.

When Anātha,piṇḍika arrived in Sīta,vana at dawn, the Buddha was pacing up and down in meditation. Seeing him, the Buddha greeted him by his personal name, “Come, **Sudatta!**” (*ehi sudatta*), which further elated him, since none of the other teachers he met knew this name, known only to him. After listening to the Buddha’s admonition, he became a streamwinner. He invited the Buddha to a meal on the following day, and after that invited him to spend the rains in Sāvattṭhī, to which the Buddha agreed. And at Sāvattṭhī, Anātha,piṇḍika bought Jeta,vana and there built a monastery for the Buddha.⁶

The Jātaka Commentary says that Anātha,piṇḍika regularly visits the Buddha twice a day, sometimes with numerous friends (J 1:9 ff); and adds that he sometimes visits the Buddha thrice a day (J 1:226). However, he never asks the Buddha a single question fearing that it might weary him (recalling that the Buddha was “a delicate prince”). Furthermore, he does not wish the Buddha to feel obliged to answer him in return for his generosity to the order. As such, the Buddha would usually address him first⁷ (DhA 1:3). There is, however, at least one very short discourse given in response to Anātha,piṇḍika’s questioning, ie, regarding those who are worthy of offerings (A 2.4.4/1:62 f), and he also consults the Buddha regarding the marriage of his daughter, Cūḷa Subhaddā (DhA 3:466).

¹ A seth (P *seṭṭhī*; Skt *śreṣṭhī*) was a financial entrepreneur, or what might today be called a fund manager or financial banker.

² A 1.14.6/1:26.

³ AA says that he fed 100 monks daily (AA 1:384 f), while DhA says 1000 monks (DhA 1:128). But according to **Piṭha J** (J 337), a monk from a distant place, who came at an unseasonable time (*vikāla*), had to starve and charged that both Anātha,piṇḍika and Visākha (at whose house he arrived late) as being faithless (J 337/3:119).

⁴ J 2:410, 3:435.

⁵ SA 1:311-315; AA 1:223, 384 f; ThaA 1:24; J 1:92 f; ApA 97.

⁶ Further, see DPPN: Anātha[piṇḍika]; also Nyanaponika & Hecker, *Great Disciples of the Buddha*, 1997:335-362 (ch 9).

⁷ See eg **Velāma S** (A 9.20/4:392-396) = SD 16.6.

Although Anātha,piṇḍika does trouble the Buddha with questions on the Dharma, he does often relate to the Buddha various incidents he has experienced, and the Buddha would in return relate stories of the past in connection with them. Amongst such Jātaka stories are the following:

Apaṇṇaka Jātaka	(J 1)	How the followers of false teachers are led astray.
Khadiraṅgāra Jātaka	(J 40)	Not letting even Māra stop us from doing good.
Rohiṇī Jātaka	(J 45)	A foolish companion can bring great loss.
Vāruṇī Jātaka	(J 47)	A lack of wisdom can bring ruin.
Puṇṇa,pāti Jātaka	(J 53)	Anātha,piṇḍika averted from being poisoned by rogues.
Kāla,kañṇī Jātaka	(J 83)	Good or bad fortune is not in a person's name.
Akataññū Jātaka	(J 90)	Ingratitude brings its own dues.
Verī Jātaka	(J 103)	Anātha,piṇḍika outruns some robbers.
Kusaṇāli Jātaka	(J 121)	A wise friend can be helpful in surprising ways.
Siri Jātaka	(J 284)	It is impossible to steal another good fortune.
Bhadra,ghaṭa Jātaka	(J 291)	A squanderer can be difficult to help.
Visayha Jātaka	(J 340)	The Bodhisattva's unshakable devotion to charity.
Hiri Jātaka	(J 363)	Ingratitude brings its own dues = J 90.
Sulasā Jātaka	(J 419)	A clever woman outwits a rogue.

Although Anātha,piṇḍika is not in the habit of questioning the Buddha on the Dharma, he is a keen listener and often visits the monks. Not only is he a shrewd entrepreneur, but also a good debater. **The (Anātha,piṇḍika) Diṭṭhi Sutta** (A 10.93), for example, records how Anātha,piṇḍika skillfully deals with the views of outside wanderers, showing that he has a good grasp of the conditioned nature of views, expected of a streamwinner.⁸ As such, he is, of course, morally upright, too, and his household is renowned for keeping fully to the five precepts, and observing the eight precepts on *uposatha* days.⁹

2 Related suttas

There are three consecutive suttas in **the Sotāpatti Saṃyutta** (S 55) named “Anātha,piṇḍika Sutta,” that is:

Anātha,piṇḍika Sutta 1	(S 55.26/5:380-385) = SD 23.2a	The 10 limbs of streamwinning;
Anātha,piṇḍika Sutta 2	(S 55.27/5:385-387) = SD 23.2b	The 4 limbs of streamwinning;
Anātha,piṇḍika Sutta 3	(S 55.28/5:388 f) = SD 3.3(4.2)	The 4 limbs of streamwinning.

Both **the Anātha,piṇḍika Suttas 1 and 2** (S 55.26+27) presents Anātha,piṇḍika as being seriously sick. **The Anātha,piṇḍika Sutta 1** (S 55.26) records how he is counselled by Sāriputta, who ingeniously presents the four limbs of the streamwinner in terms of the ten rightness (*sammatta*), which normally refers to arhathood. This is an example of a contextual teaching (*pariyāyena*).¹⁰ When informed of this, the Buddha endorses Sāriputta's teaching, declaring him exceptionally wise in doing so [§26].

In **the Anātha,piṇḍika Sutta 2**, Ānanda gives bedside counselling to Anātha,piṇḍika by admonishing him on the traditional formula of the four limbs of streamwinning (*sotāpannessa āṅgāni*). It is likely that this simpler teaching is given first to Anātha,piṇḍika, and later, on another occasion, Sāriputta gives a more detailed teaching. The Saṃyutta reciters have put Sāriputta's teaching before Ānanda probably on account of the former's seniority.

⁸ A 10.93/5:185-189. There are a number of discourses where the Buddha discusses the noble disciple's insight into dependent arising in a sutta addressed to Anātha,piṇḍika (S 12.41/2:70 = 55.28/5:388; A 5.179/3:213. 9.27/4:407, 10.92/5:184), or given in his presence (A 10.91/5:179).

⁹ The *uposatha* days are the days preceding the four stages of the moon's waxing, ie, the 1st, 8th, 15th and 23rd nights of the lunar month. **The Siri,kāla,kañṇī J** (J 382) is told by the Buddha in connection with the moral purity of Anātha,piṇḍika's household (J 382/3:257).

¹⁰ See *Pariyāya Nippariyāya* = SD 30.16.

The **Anātha,piṇḍik’ovāda Sutta** (M 143) records teachings—such as, the five aggregates—normally given to renunciants as being given to Anātha,piṇḍika (a streamwinner), who is very ill. Some time later he passes away and is reborn as a Tusita deva.¹¹

The **Anātha,piṇḍika Sutta 3** (S 55.28), however, is the same as the **Pañca Vera,bhaya Sutta** (S 12.41).¹² This Sutta is interesting in that it gives a complete list of teachings for the goal of streamwinning, in this sequence:

- (1) the five precepts (called the “five hateful terrors,” *pañca vera,bhaya*), how they arise and how they are quelled;
- (2) the four limbs of a streamwinner (*sotāpannassa aṅgāni*); and
- (3) the noble way (*ariya ñāya*), that is, dependent arising. (S 12.41/2:68-70) = SD 3.3(4.2)

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¹¹ M 143/3:258-263 = SD 23.9.

¹² The importance of this third sutta is attested by the fact that it also appears as **Pañca Vera,bhaya S** (S 12.41/2:68-70) = SD 3.3(4.2), **Pañca Vera S** (S 55.28/5:387-389), and **Bhaya Vera S** (A 10.92/5:182-184), and also has other names such as **Pañca Bhaya,vera S**.

The Discourse to Anātha,piṇḍika 1

(S 55.26/5:380-385)

1 Originating at Sāvattḥī.

Anātha,piṇḍika is sick

2 Now at that time the householder Anātha,piṇḍika was ill, in pain, gravely ill.

3 Then the householder Anātha,piṇḍika addressed a certain servant [man], thus:

“Come, my good man, approach the venerable Sāriputta, and, in my name, pay homage to him with your head at his feet, saying:

‘Bhante, the householder Anātha,piṇḍika is sick, in pain, and seriously sick. He pays homage to the venerable Sāriputta at his feet.’

And say thus:

‘It is good, bhante, if the venerable Sāriputta, out of compassion, visits the householder Anātha,piṇḍika in his house.’” [381]

“Yes, sir,” the servant replied to the householder Anātha,piṇḍika, and approached the venerable Sāriputta. Having approached the venerable Sāriputta, he saluted him, and sat down at one side.

4 Seated thus at one side, the servant said this to the venerable Sāriputta:

“Bhante, the householder Anātha,piṇḍika is sick, in pain, and seriously sick. He pays homage to the venerable Sāriputta at his feet.

And he says thus:

‘It is good, bhante, if the venerable Sāriputta, out of compassion, visits the householder Anātha,piṇḍika in his house.’”

The venerable Sāriputta consented by his silence.

Sariputta visits Anātha,piṇḍika

5 Then early in the morning, the venerable Sāriputta, having dressed himself, taking robe and bowl, with the venerable Ānanda as the attending monk, approached the householder Anātha,piṇḍika’s house. Then, he sat on the prepared seat.

Seated thus, the venerable Sāriputta addressed the householder Anātha,piṇḍika thus:

“How are you, householder? I hope you are bearing up, and getting better. I hope that your pains are subsiding, that their subsiding is evident, not their rising.”¹³

“Bhante, I am not bearing up;¹⁴ I am not getting better; my pains are not subsiding, but rising; their rising is evident, not their subsiding.”

The qualities of a streamwinner

6 (1) WISE FAITH IN THE BUDDHA. “Now, householder, such it is that an uninstructed worldling, endowed with faithlessness, after death, when the body has broken up, is reborn in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.

But you are not such a one who lacks faith in the Buddha [the awakened one].

¹³ *Kacci te āvuso gaha,pati khamāyāṃ kacci yāpanāyāṃ kacci dukkhā vedanā paṭikkamanti no abhikkhamanti, paṭikkamo sānam paññāyati no abhikkamo ti*, lit “Householder, perhaps you are bearing it, perhaps you can keep going; that your pains are subsiding, not rising; that their subsiding is evident, not their rising.” This is stock. The underscored phrase lit tr “perhaps you are fit to keep going.” I have rendered this as “How are you?” and place it at the head of the sentence for the sake of acceptable English.

¹⁴ A lengthier version of this stock passage occurs in **Dhānañjāni S** (M 97.29/2:193,1) = SD 4.9, **Anātha,piṇḍik’ovāda S** (M 143.4/3:259,8) = SD 23.9, **Chann’ovāda S** (M 144.5/3:264) = SD 11.12 and **Phaggunā S** (A 6.56/3:379,25) = SD 23.4, to describe the illness of the brahmin Dhānañjāni, of the householder Anātha,piṇḍika, and of the monk Phaggunā, respectively.

Indeed, householder, you are one with wise faith in the Buddha, thus:

‘Such is the Blessed One:
 he is an arhat,
 fully self-awakened,
 accomplished in wisdom and conduct,
 well-farer,
 knower of worlds,
 peerless guide of tamable people,
 teacher of gods and humans,
 awakened,
 blessed.’

And as you reflect your own wise faith in the Buddha, your pains (*vedanā*) may subside right away.

7 (2) WISE FAITH IN THE DHARMA. Now, householder, such it is that an uninstructed worldling, endowed with faithlessness, after death, [382] when the body has broken up, is reborn in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.

But you are not such a one who lacks faith in the Dharma [the true teaching].

Indeed, householder, you are one with wise faith in the Dharma, thus:

‘Well-taught is the Blessed One’s Dharma,
 visible here and now,
 immediate [having nothing to do with time],
 inviting one to come and see,
 accessible,
 to be personally known by the wise.’

And as you reflect your own wise faith in the Dharma, your pains (*vedanā*) may subside right away.

8 (3) WISE FAITH IN THE SANGHA. Now, householder, such it is that an uninstructed worldling, endowed with faithless, after death, when the body has broken up, is reborn in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.

But you are not such a one who lacks faith in the Sangha [the holy community of saints].

Indeed, householder, you are one with wise faith in the Sangha, thus:

‘The Blessed One’s community of disciples keeps to the good way;
 the Blessed One’s community of disciples keeps to the straight way;
 the Blessed One’s community of disciples keeps to the true way;
 the Blessed One’s community of disciples keeps to the proper way.

These are the four pairs of persons, the eight individuals:¹⁵

this Blessed One’s community of disciples is
 worthy of offerings,¹⁶
 worthy of hospitality,
 worthy of gifts,¹⁷
 worthy of salutation with the lotus-palms,
 an incomparable field of merit for the world.’

And as you reflect your own wise faith in the Sangha, your pains (*vedanā*) may subside right away.

9 (4) NOBLE MORAL VIRTUE. Now, householder, such it is that an uninstructed worldling, endowed with immorality, after death, when the body has broken up, is reborn in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.

But you are not such a one who lacks moral virtue.

¹⁵ On who “These four pairs of persons...” are, see **Atṭha,puggala S 1** (A 4:292 = D 33.3.1(3)/3:255). See also SD 15.5(3): Saṅghānussmṛti & Saṅghānussati.

¹⁶ *Āhuneyyo*. That is, worthy of receiving sacrifices or offerings. The Skt cognate *āhavanīya* refers to that which was offered as an oblation as in *āhuneyy’aggī*, one of the 3 brahminical sacrificial fires (the one in the east).

¹⁷ *Dakkhiṇeyyo*. Specifically refers to offerings made for the benefit of the departed by way of dedication of merits to them.

Indeed, householder, you are one with moral virtue, beloved of the aryas, that are unbroken, untorn [consistent], unmixed [not altering the rules], spotless, liberating, praised by the wise, untarnished, giving rise to concentration.¹⁸

And as you reflect within your own moral virtue, beloved of the aryas, your pains (*vedanā*) may subside right away.

The ten rightness

10 (1) RIGHT VIEW. Now, householder, such it is that an uninstructed worldling, endowed with wrong view, after death, when the body has broken up, is reborn in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.

But you are not such a one who lacks right view.

Indeed, householder, you are one with right view.

And as you reflect your own right view, your pains (*vedanā*) may subside right away.

11 (2) RIGHT THOUGHT. Now, householder, such it is that an uninstructed worldling, endowed with wrong thought, after death, when the body has broken up, is reborn in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.

But you are not such a one who lacks right thought.

Indeed, householder, you are one with right thought.

And as you reflect your own right thought, your pains (*vedanā*) may subside right away. [383]

12 (3) RIGHT SPEECH. Now, householder, such it is that a uninstructed worldling, endowed with wrong speech, after death, when the body has broken up, is reborn in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.

But you are not such a one who lacks right speech.

Indeed, householder, you are one with right speech.

And as you reflect your own right speech, your pains (*vedanā*) may subside right away.

13 (4) RIGHT ACTION. Now, householder, such it is that a uninstructed worldling, endowed with wrong action, after death, when the body has broken up, is reborn in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.

But you are not such a one who lacks right action.

Indeed, householder, you are one with right action.

And as you reflect your own right action, your pains (*vedanā*) may subside right away.

14 (5) RIGHT LIVELIHOOD. Now, householder, such it is that an uninstructed worldling, endowed with wrong livelihood, after death, when the body has broken up, is reborn in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.

But you are not such a one who lacks right livelihood.

Indeed, householder, you are one with right livelihood.

And as you reflect your own right livelihood, your pains (*vedanā*) may subside right away.

15 (6) RIGHT EFFORT. Now, householder, such it is that a uninstructed worldling, endowed with wrong effort, after death, when the body has broken up, is reborn in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.

But you are not such a one who lacks right effort.

Indeed, householder, you are one with right effort.

And as you reflect your own right effort, your pains (*vedanā*) may subside right away.

¹⁸ “Moral virtue unbroken, ...giving rise to concentration,” *sīlāni akhaṇḍāni acchiddāni asabalāni akammāsāni bhujissāni viññūpasatthāni aparāmaṭṭhāni samādhi, samivattanakāni* (D 2:80, 3:245; M 1:322, 2:251; S 5:408; A 3:134, 3:289, 290; Pm 1:44; Nett 56). These are said to be “virtues dear to the noble ones,” *ariya, kantāni sīlāni* (S 5:364, 382, 386, 396, 408; A 3:36). The virtues of the noble one are explained at Vism 221 f. SA says that the noble ones do not violate the Five Precepts; hence, these virtues are dear to them (SA 2:74). See UA 268.

16 (7) RIGHT MINDFULNESS. Now, householder, such it is that an uninstructed worldling, endowed with wrong mindfulness, after death, when the body has broken up, is reborn in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.

But you are not such a one who lacks right mindfulness.

Indeed, householder, you are one with right mindfulness.

And as you reflect your own right mindfulness, your pains (*vedanā*) may subside right away.

17 (8) RIGHT CONCENTRATION. Now, householder, such it is that an uninstructed worldling, endowed with wrong concentration, after death, when the body has broken up, is reborn in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.

But you are not such a one who lacks right concentration.

Indeed, householder, you are one with right concentration.

And as you reflect your own right concentration, your pains (*vedanā*) may subside right away. [384]

18 (9) RIGHT KNOWLEDGE. Now, householder, such it is that an uninstructed worldling, endowed with wrong knowledge, after death, when the body has broken up, is reborn in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.

But you are not such a one who lacks right knowledge.

Indeed, householder, you are one with right knowledge.

And as you reflect your own right knowledge, your pains (*vedanā*) may subside right away.

19 (10) RIGHT LIBERATION. Now, householder, such it is that an uninstructed worldling, endowed with wrong liberation, after death, when the body has broken up, is reborn in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.

But you are not such a one who lacks right liberation.

Indeed, householder, you are one with right liberation.

And as you reflect your own right liberation, your pains (*vedanā*) may subside right away.

20 Then the pains of the householder Anātha,piṇḍika subsided right away.

Anātha,piṇḍika recovers

21 Then the householder Anātha,piṇḍika served the venerable Sāriputta and the venerable Ānanda from his own pot of milk-rice.

22 Then when the venerable Sāriputta and the venerable Ānanda had finished their meal, and withdrawn their hands from the bowl, the householder Anātha,piṇḍika took a certain low stool and sat down on it at one side.

23 Seated thus at one side, the venerable Sāriputta gave thanks to the householder Anātha,piṇḍika with these verses:¹⁹

*Yassa saddhā Tathāgate
acalā suppatiṭṭhitā
sīlaṅ ca yassa kalyāṇaṃ
ariya,kantaṃ pasaṃsitaṃ*

Who has faith in the Tathagata,
unshaken, well-placed,
and whose moral virtue is beautiful,
praised, dear to the noble ones,

*saṅghe pasādo yass'atthi
uju,bhūtaṅ ca dassanaṃ
adaḷiddo'ti taṃ āhu
amoghaṃ tassa jīvitam*

who has faith in the Sangha,
and whose view has become straight:
“He is not poor,” it is said,
his life not empty.

*tasmā saddhaṅ ca sīlaṅ ca
pasādaṃ dhamma,dassanaṃ
anuyuñjetha medhāvī
saraṃ buddhāna.sāsanaṃ ti*

Therefore, have faith and be virtuous,
be radiant, seeing the Dharma:
the wise is devoted
to remembering the Buddha's Teaching.

¹⁹ S 11.14.10/1:232, 55.51.4/5:405; A 4.52.2/2:57, 5.47.6/3:54.

24 Then when the venerable Sāriputta had given thanks to the householder Anātha,piṇḍika with these verses, he rose from his seat and departed. [385]

Ānanda reports to the Buddha

25 Then the venerable Ānanda approached the Blessed One, saluted him, and then sat down at one side. Seated thus at one side, the Blessed One said this to the venerable Ānanda:

26 “Come now, Ānanda, where have you come from in this middle of the day?”

“Bhante, the householder Anātha,piṇḍika was admonished by the venerable Sāriputta in such and such a manner.”

“Wise, Ānanda, is Sāriputta, greatly wise, Ānanda, is Sāriputta, that he has analysed the four limbs of streamwinning in their ten modes!”²⁰

— evaṃ —

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²⁰ *Paṇḍito Ānanda Sāri,putto, mahā,pañño Ānanda Sāriputto, yatra hi nāma cattāri sotāpatti-y-aṅgāni dasahi ākārehi vibhajissatī ti.* That is, the 4 limbs of streamwinning + the 10 rightness (*sammatta*), ie, the arya’s eightfold path, together with the knowledge and liberation.